DC
BATMAN
by STARLIN, APARO & DeCARLO
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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Book Three of Four
a Death in the Family
The Batman was too late.
And now Robin lies in rubble, still, silent, shattered.
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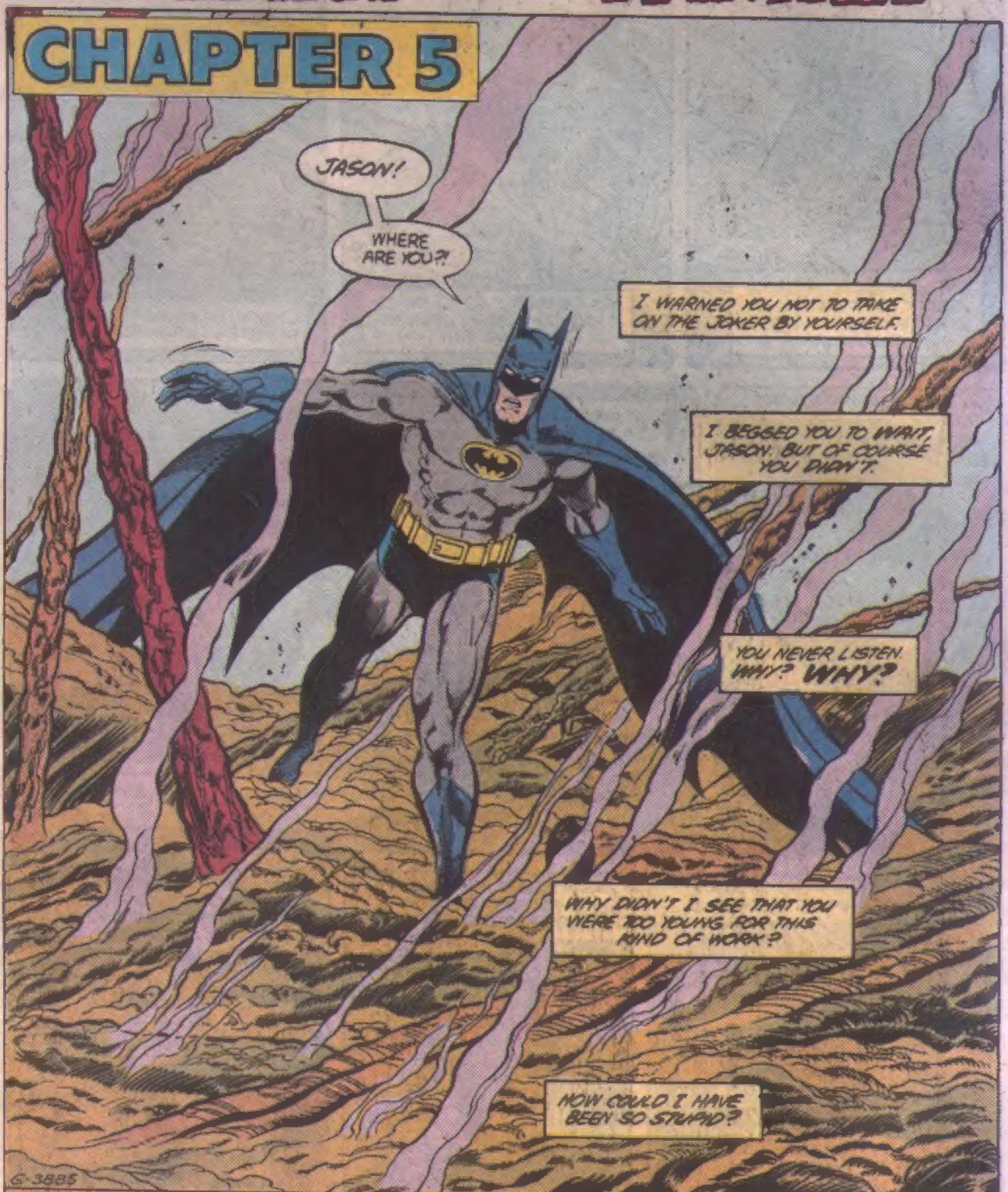
A DEATH in the FAMILY

CHAPTER 5


JASON!
WHERE ARE YOU?!
I WARNED YOU NOT TO TAKE ON THE JOKER BY YOURSELF.
I BEGGED YOU TO WAIT, JASON. BUT OF COURSE YOU DIDN'T.
YOU NEVER LISTEN. WHY? WHY?
WHY DIDN'T I SEE THAT YOU WERE TOO YOUNG FOR THIS KIND OF WORK?
HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO STUPID?
G-3885

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CREATED BY BOB KANE

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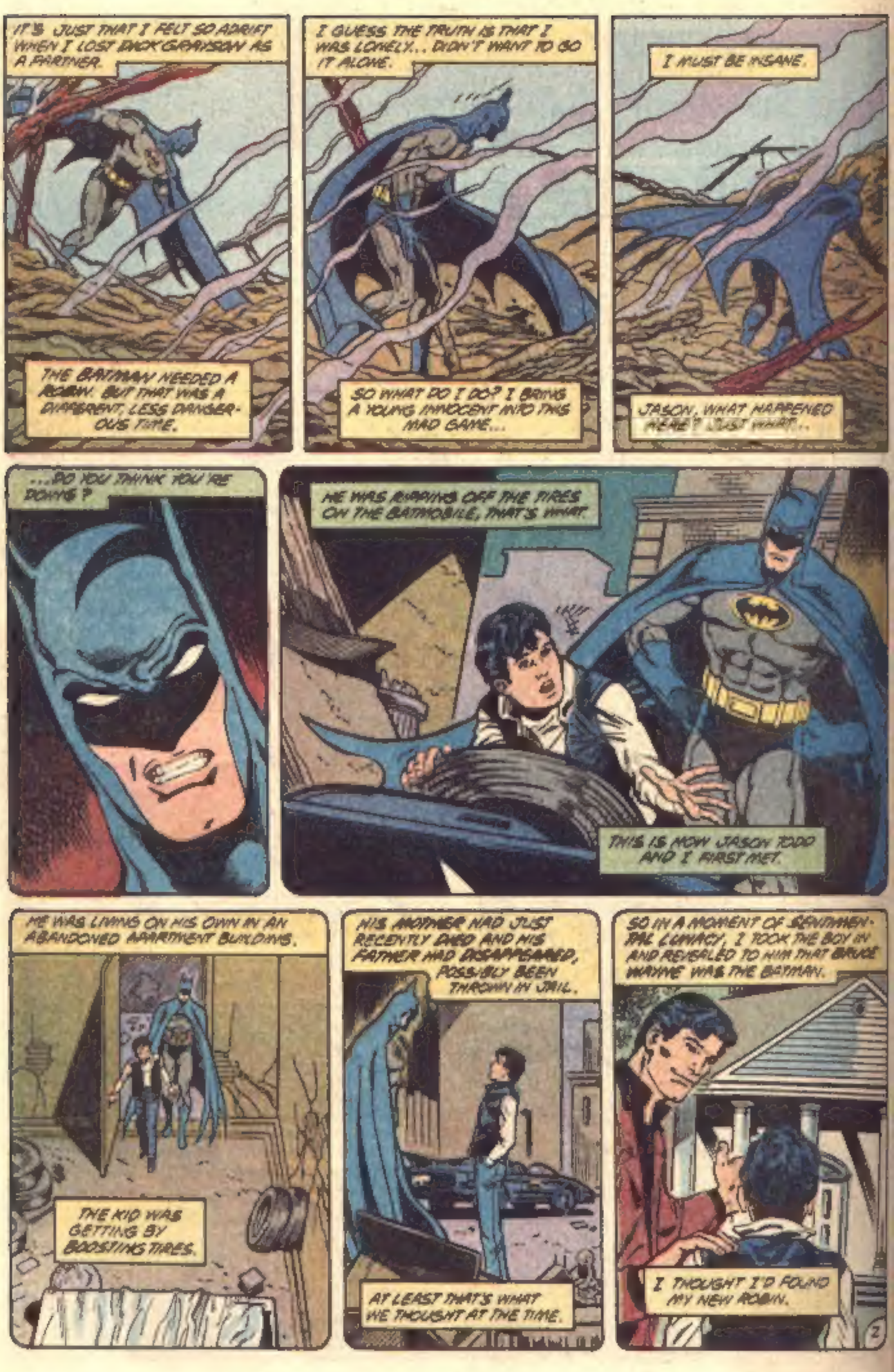
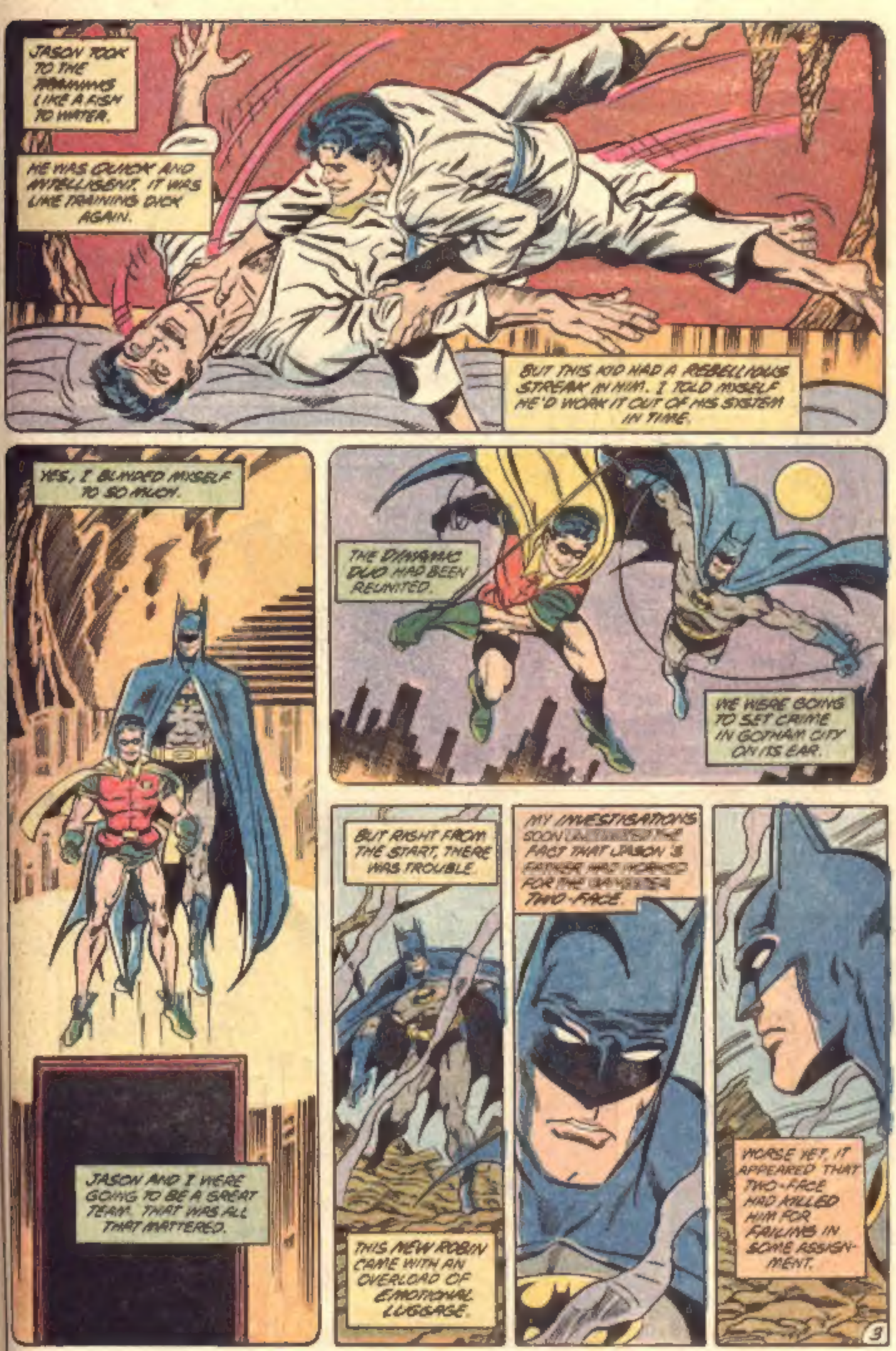
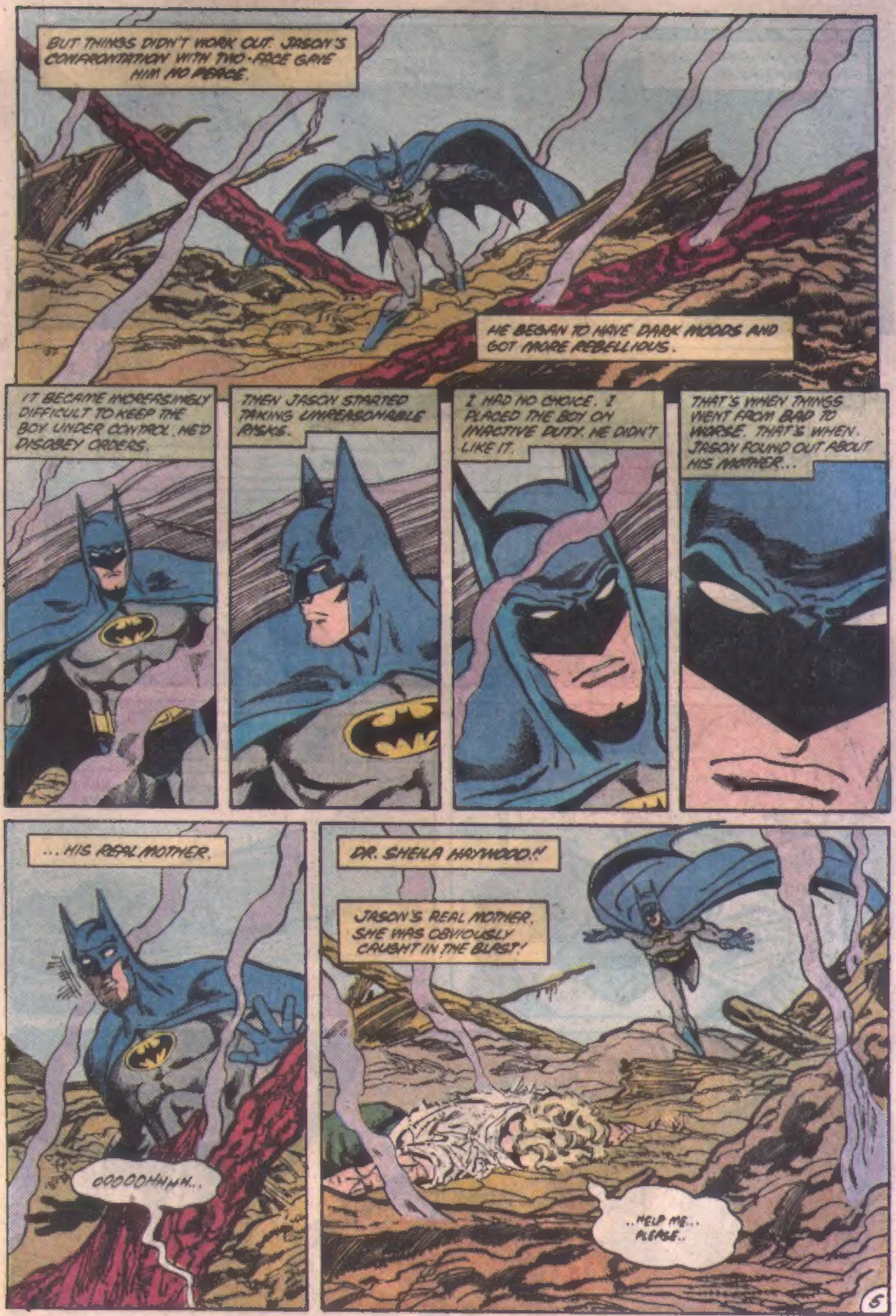

IT'S JUST THAT I FELT SO ADRIFT WHEN I LOST DICK GRAYSON AS A PARTNER.
THE BATMAN NEEDED A ROBIN. BUT THAT WAS A DIFFERENT, LESS DANGEROUS TIME.
I GUESS THE TRUTH IS THAT I WAS LONELY... DIDN'T WANT TO GO IT ALONE.
SO WHAT DO I DO? I BRING A YOUNG INNOCENT INTO THIS MAD GAME...
I MUST BE INSANE.
JASON, WHAT HAPPENED HERE? JUST WHAT...
...DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
HE WAS RIPPING OFF THE TIRES ON THE BATMOBILE, THAT'S WHAT.
THIS IS HOW JASON TODD AND I FIRST MET.
HE WAS LIVING ON HIS OWN IN AN ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING.
THE KID WAS GETTING BY BOOSTING TIRES.
HIS MOTHER HAD JUST RECENTLY DIED AND HIS FATHER HAD DISAPPEARED, POSSIBLY BEEN THROWN IN JAIL.
AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT WE THOUGHT AT THE TIME.
SO IN A MOMENT OF SENTIMENTAL LUNACY, I TOOK THE BOY IN AND REVEALED TO HIM THAT BRUCE WAYNE WAS THE BATMAN.
I THOUGHT I'D FOUND MY NEW ROBIN.
2


JASON TOOK TO THE TRAINING LIKE A FISH TO WATER.
HE WAS QUICK AND INTELLIGENT. IT WAS LIKE TRAINING DICK AGAIN.
BUT THIS KID HAD A REBELLIOUS STREAK IN HIM. I TOLD MYSELF HE'D WORK IT OUT OF HIS SYSTEM IN TIME.
YES, I BLINDED MYSELF TO SO MUCH.
JASON AND I WERE GOING TO BE A GREAT TEAM. THAT WAS ALL THAT MATTERED.
THE DYNAMIC DUO HAD BEEN REUNITED.
WE WERE GOING TO SET CRIME IN GOTHAM CITY ON ITS EAR.
BUT RIGHT FROM THE START, THERE WAS TROUBLE.
THIS NEW ROBIN CAME WITH AN OVERLOAD OF EMOTIONAL LUGGAGE.
MY INVESTIGATIONS SOON UNCOVERED THE FACT THAT JASON'S FATHER HAD WORKED FOR THE GANGSTER TWO-FACE.
WORSE YET, IT APPEARED THAT TWO-FACE HAD KILLED HIM FOR FAILING IN SOME ASSIGNMENT.
9

THEN I MADE THE BLUNDER OF FILING THIS INFORMATION IN THE BATCAVE'S COMPUTER.
SO MANY MISTAKES...
YES, I FOUND IT!!
HOW COULD YOU KEEP THIS SECRET FROM ME?!
OF COURSE AFTER THAT, OUR TOP PRIORITY WAS TRACKING DOWN AND BUSTING TWO-FACE'S GANG.
MY WORST FEAR WAS THAT JASON WANTED MORE THAN JUSTICE FOR HIS FATHER'S DEATH.
I WAS AFRAID THAT HE WAS OUT FOR BLOOD.
BUT THEN THE MOMENT OF TRUTH CAME.
CIRCUMSTANCES PUT TWO-FACE AT THE BOY'S MERCY.
JASON WALKED AWAY.
HE LET TWO-FACE'S PUNISHMENT BE DETERMINED BY THE LAW.
I WAS SO PROUD OF THE LAD.
I THOUGHT, AT LAST, EVERYTHING WOULD BE OKAY.
4


BUT THINGS DIDN'T WORK OUT. JASON'S CONFRONTATION WITH TWO-FACE GAVE HIM NO PEACE.
HE BEGAN TO HAVE DARK MOODS AND GOT MORE REBELLIOUS.
IT BECAME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO KEEP THE BOY UNDER CONTROL. HE'D DISOBEY ORDERS.
THEN JASON STARTED TAKING UNREASONABLE RISKS.
I HAD NO CHOICE. I PLACED THE BOY ON INACTIVE DUTY. HE DIDN'T LIKE IT.
THAT'S WHEN THINGS WENT FROM BAD TO WORSE. THAT'S WHEN JASON FOUND OUT ABOUT HIS MOTHER...
... HIS REAL MOTHER.
OOOOOHMMM...
DR. SHEILA HAYWOOD?!
JASON'S REAL MOTHER. SHE WAS OBVIOUSLY CAUGHT IN THE BLAST!
..HELP ME.. PLEASE..
6

SHE'S IN BAD SHAPE... NOT GOING TO MAKE IT...
I'M STUNNED AND MY MIND DRIFTS...
YOUNG JASON HAS RUN AWAY FROM HOME, SIR.
I TRACKED JASON DOWN TO THE MIDDLE EAST.
UNFORTUNATELY HE WASN'T THE ONLY ONE HEADING THIS WAY.
SO WAS MY OLD FOE, THE JOKER.
JASON HAD THREE WOMEN WHO HE SUSPECTED MIGHT BE HIS REAL MOTHER. HE STRUCK OUT ON THE FIRST TWO.
BUT HE HIT PAYDIRT WHEN WE CAME TO THAT FAMINE REFUGEE CAMP, HERE IN ETHIOPIA.
I CAN STILL SEE THE HAPPINESS ON THE BOY'S FACE WHEN HE REALIZED THE SEARCH FOR HIS REAL MOTHER HAD COME TO AN END.
I LEFT JASON AT THAT CAMP, TO GET TO KNOW HIS MOTHER BETTER
IT SEEMED LIKE THE RIGHT THING TO DO AT THE TIME.
HOW WAS I TO KNOW THAT JASON WOULD DISCOVER THAT HIS MOTHER WAS DOING BUSINESS WITH THE JOKER?
6

THE JOKER PLANNED TO HIJACK A SHIPMENT OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES, TO REPLENISH HIS OPERATING FUNDS.
HE PLANNED TO SUBSTITUTE A LOAD OF HIS LETHAL LAUGHING GAS IN PLACE OF THESE SUPPLIES.
I HAD TO GO AFTER THE SHIPMENT WHICH WAS HEADED FOR A REFUGEE CAMP. HUNDREDS OF INNOCENT PEOPLE WOULD HAVE DIED IF I HADN'T.
JASON WAS SUPPOSE TO WAIT FOR MY RETURN, BEFORE GOING AFTER HIS MOTHER AND THE JOKER.
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN HE WOULDN'T WAIT...
SHEILA...
WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
JOKER...
...HE TIED US UP... SET BOMB TO EXPLODE...
...WANTED TO ELIMINATE... ALL EVIDENCE... OF HIS BEING HERE...
...JASON TRIED... TO RESCUE ME...
...WE... ALMOST... MADE IT... SO CLOSE...
...HE TURNED OUT... TO BE... SUCH A... GOOD KID...
...ALL HIS PROBLEMS... AND HE... STILL... TURNED OUT GOOD...
...HE'S... MUCH BETTER... THAN I DESERVE...
...MUCH BETTER...
...HE THREW... HIMSELF... IN FRONT... OF ME... IN FRONT OF ME...
...HE TOOK... THE MAIN BRUNT... OF THE BLAST...
7

...SUCH A... GOOD BOY...
...MUST HAVE... REALLY...LOVED HIS...MOTHER...
...HIS... HIS... UGH...
GONE.
THE PAIN IS ALL BEHIND HER.
8

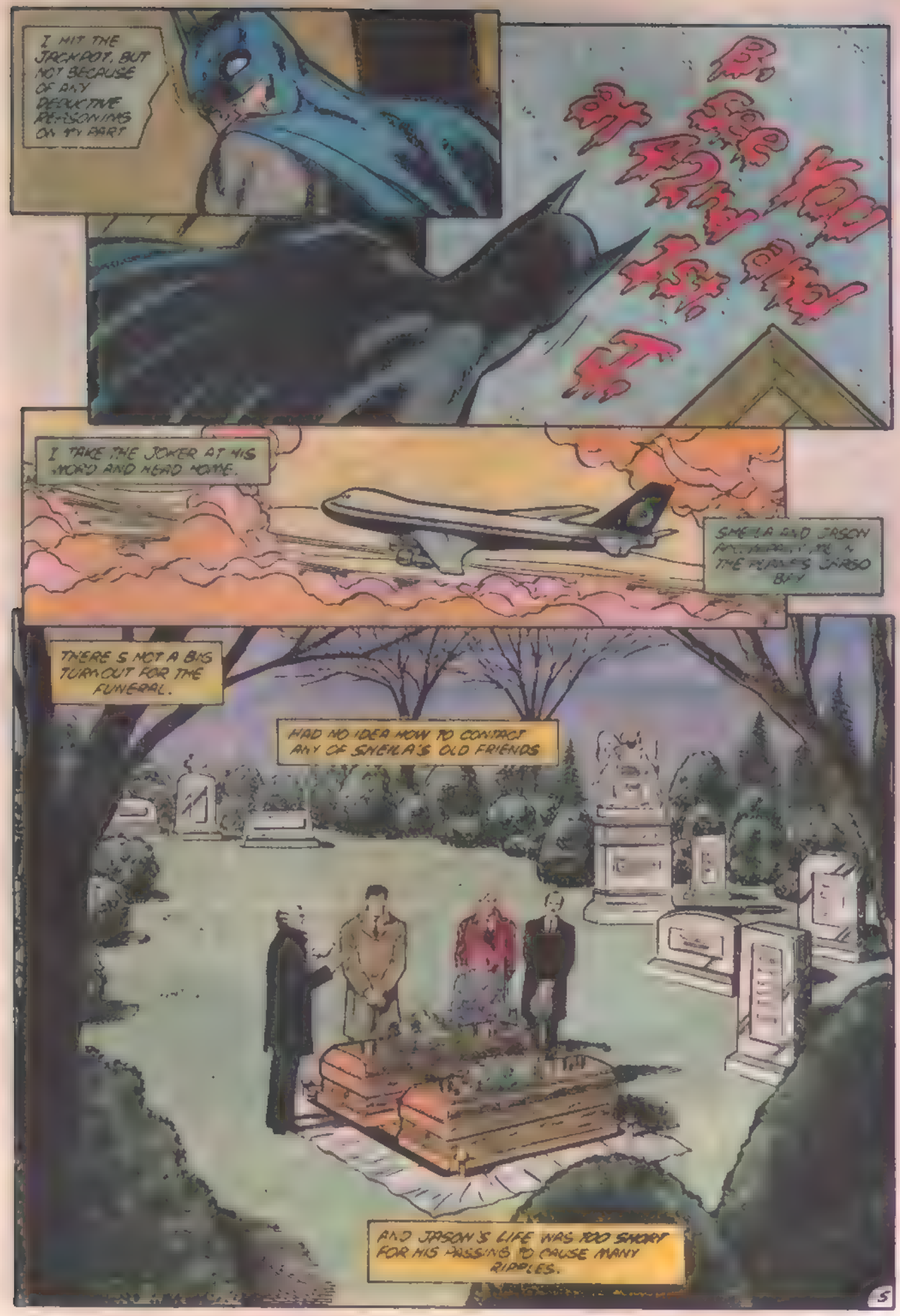
ONE LOOK TELLS THE STORY. THERE'S NO NEED TO CHECK FOR A PULSE.
BUT I DO ANYWAY.
NOTHING.
I'VE LOST HIM.
HE'S ALREADY GETTING COLD TO THE TOUCH.
GONE.

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA.
HERE ARE THE MEDICAL SUPPLIES YOU CONTRACTED FOR, EFFENDI
LET IT BE KNOWN THAT THE JOKER ALWAYS DELIVERS ON HIS WORD.
WE ARE INDEED PLEASED BY THIS
BUT THERE IS ANOTHER MATTER WE MUST DISCUSS
I HAVE TWO GENTLEMEN WITH ME WHO WISH TO SPEAK WITH YOU
AND WHO MIGHT THEY BE?

WE ARE MEMBERS OF THE IRANIAN SECRET SERVICE
MY, MY! NOW WHAT WOULD A COUPLE OF THE AYATOLLAH'S BOYS WANT WITH ME?
OUR SUPERIOR HAS A BUSINESS PROPOSITION HE'D LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH YOU
HE'S WAITING IN THE REAR OFFICE.
HERE! HOLD THIS.
I'LL SETTLE UP WITH YOU BOYS WHEN I GET BACK.
PLEASE, SIR. MY SUPERIOR IS NOT USED TO BEING KEPT WAITING.
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE MY CUE TO JUMP THROUGH A HOOP?
SORRY EFFENDI, I DON'T DO REQUESTS
IF YOU LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO GET TO KNOW ME, ABDUL, YOU'LL FIND THAT THE JOKER ISN'T IMPRESSED BY
.. JUST
ANYONE
LILP!
2

I HAVE A POSITION IN MY GOVERNMENT I WISH TO OFFER YOU, MONSIEUR JOKER
I REMOVE WHAT LITTLE REMAINS OF JASON'S COSTUME THAT COULD HAVE IDENTIFIED HIM AS ROBIN BEFORE CALLING THE AUTHORITIES
THEY'VE GOT A MILLION QUESTIONS. THIS TAKES UP MOST OF THE DAY
BRUCE WAYNE PATIENTLY ANSWERS THEIR EVERY INQUIRY
NO, I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAUSED THE EXPLOSION MAYBE SOMETHING THEY HAD STORED THERE?
THE VICTIM'S NAMES WERE SHEILA HAYWOOD AND JASON TODD. THEY WERE MOTHER AND SON
YES, I'LL SEE TO THE HAVING THE BODIES FLOWN BACK TO THE STATES FOR BURIAL
I'LL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING
3

THE COPS CONTINUE THEIR SEARCH FOR THE CAUSE OF THIS TRAGEDY, EVIDENCE I'VE ALREADY REMOVED FROM THE SCENE.
LET THEM WRITE IT OFF AS AN ACCIDENT THERE'S NO REASON FOR THEM TO BE INVOLVED.
THIS IS A PERSONAL MATTER
IT'S SOMETHING THE JOKER AND I SHOULD HAVE SETTLED BETWEEN US A LONG TIME AGO.
I DON'T LOCATE THE WAREHOUSE THE JOKER USED UNTIL THE FOLLOWING NIGHT.
I KNOW HE'LL BE LONG GONE FROM HERE BUT IT'S GOT TO BE CHECKED OUT ANYWAY.
THE JOKER MAY HAVE LEFT A CLUE TO HIS WHEREABOUTS, ALONG WITH THE BODIES OF HIS DISCARDED HENCHMEN
I'LL NEVER GET USED TO THE RASORED SMILES OF THE JOKER'S VICTIMS.


I HIT THE JACKPOT, BUT NOT BECAUSE OF ANY DEDUCTIVE REASONING ON MY PART
I TAKE THE JOKER AT HIS WORD AND HEAD HOME.
SHEILA AND JASON
THERE'S NOT A BIG TURNOUT FOR THE FUNERAL.
HAD NO IDEA HOW TO CONTACT ANY OF SHEILA'S OLD FRIENDS
AND JASON'S LIFE WAS TOO SHORT FOR HIS PASSING TO CAUSE MANY RIPPLES.
5

YOU SEE, THE WORLD DOESN'T KNOW THAT THE NEW ROBIN IS DEAD
JONES
THAT'S THE WAY IT HAS TO REMAIN, IF I WANT TO MAINTAIN A SECRET IDENTITY
YEAH I KNOW THAT'S COLD BUT THAT'S HOW IT'S GOING TO BE
IT'S A REAL CRUEL WORLD OUT THERE
SHOULD I GET IN TOUCH WITH MASTER DICK, MASTER BRUCE?
HUH?
NO.. NO ALFRED I'LL HANDLE THIS BY MYSELF
NO HELP FROM NOW ON...
THAT'S THE WAY I WANT IT
IN GOTHAM CITY, THERE'S A DELI, DRUGSTORE, NEWSSTAND AND DEPARTMENT STORE ON THE CORNER OF FOURTY-SECOND AND FIRST
IT'S NOTHING LIKE ME. THAT'S WHERE THE JOKER WANTS TO MEET.
IN METROPOLIS THERE'S TWO PARKING LOTS ANOTHER DELI AND AN OFFICE BUILDING ON THOSE CORNERS SO
BUT IN NEW YORK CITY

THE UNITED NATIONS PLAZA
THIS HAS GOT TO BE IT!
THE JOKER WANTED ME TO KNOW HE WAS COMING TO THE U.N
BUT WHY?
WHAT IS HE PLANNING?
I'VE GOT TO FIND SOMETHING TO TELL ME WHAT THAT MADMAN'S UP TO
THEN JOKER IT'LL BE JUST YOU AND ME
I'VE EXCUSED THE EVIL YOU'VE DONE IN THE PAST BECAUSE OF YOUR INSANITY
I'LL NOT MAKE THAT MISTAKE AGAIN
BATMAN!
17

SUPERMAN?!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
THE STATE DEPARTMENT ASKED ME TO STOP BY.
WHY?
BECAUSE THEY GUESSED YOU'D BE HERE
HOW DID THEY KNOW THAT?
THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT REPORTED THEM THAT YOU MIGHT SHOW UP TO CAUSE TROUBLE
SUPERMAN, WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

THIS IS NOT GOING TO BE EASY TO EXPLAIN BATMAN
I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND HOW IT ALL CAME ABOUT MYSELF
IRAN HAS A NEW AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N SHOWING UP TODAY
THE STATE DEPARTMENT CHECKED IT'S ALL LEGITIMATE AND BY THE BOOK.
SO IT SEEMS THIS MAN NOW HAS COMPLETE DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY.
THAT MEANS NO ONE CAN ARREST HIM FOR ANY CRIMES IN THIS COUNTRY
THE POLICE CAN'T TOUCH HIM.
NEITHER CAN YOU
THIS IMMUNITY ALSO COVERS ANY VIOLATIONS OF THE LAW HE MIGHT HAVE COMMITTED BEFORE BEING APPOINTED TO THE POST.
I'M SORRY, BATMAN. THAT'S THE WAY IT WORKS
WE HAVE TO GO ALONG WITH THIS MADNESS DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY IS A TWO-WAY STREET
IF WE DON'T HONOR IRAN'S RIGHTS IN THIS MATTER, THERE'S NO REASON FOR THEM TO RESPECT OURS.
I DON'T KNOW IF THEY EVER DID OR DID YOU JUST FORGET HOW THEY TOOK OVER OUR EMBASSY A FEW YEARS BACK
IF YOU TRY ANYTHING, BATMAN, IT COULD CAUSE AN INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT
19

I'M HERE TO TALK SENSE TO YOU BUT IF THAT DOESN'T WORK.
WHO'S THE AMBASSADOR?
WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO HOME
WHO?
WHO?!
THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO HERE
WHO?
KA-TTTTACK

FEEL BETTER NOW?
THINK I BROKE A COUPLE OF KNUCKLES...
NO, BUT THEY'RE BADLY BRUISED.
YOU'RE LUCKY I ROLLED WITH THAT PUNCH. YOU COULD HAVE CRIPPLED YOURSELF.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU ACTUALLY DID THAT, BATMAN. WHAT'S EATING YOU?
WHEN DOES THIS NEW AMBASSADOR ARRIVE?
THAT'S HIM PULLING UP TO THE CURB NOW.
BATMAN, DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID!
NO!
NO!
NO!
21

NOW ISN'T THIS TOUCHING!
MY OLD PALS, SUPERMAN AND BATPEST, HAVE COME TO CONGRATULATE ME!
IT'S TRUE, GUYS. I'M THE NEW IRANIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.!
EAT YOUR HEARTS OUT.
TO BE CONCLUDED!

BAT-SIGNALS

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L-3172

Parts One and Two of "A Death in the Family" didn't have room for letter columns, so I'm going to be squeezing three issues' worth of comments into these two pages. Yes, I'd like to print two pages on each issue, but I just don't have the room. Here now, is a batch of letters on BATMAN #423, #424, and #425. Your reactions to our present storyline have already started pouring in (you hate us, you love us, you're disgusted with us, you're deeply impressed, etc.), and they'll be appearing next issue.

Dear Denny and Daniel,

For the last ten months, the BATMAN series has been one of my favorites, thanks to you, Mr. Aparo, and Jim "Mr. Breath of Fresh Air" Starlin. The only predictable part of this book is the quality.

In "You Shoulda Seen Him..." (BATMAN #423) the long debated topic of the "definitive" Batman was (I hope) put to rest. As Jim shows us, Batman is many people, with many emotions and moods. Just like the rest of us. He is a person, and if Batman ever becomes just a gritty detective, or just a caring person, or just an adventurer, then the readers will be cheated.

Of course, we all have our favorite version of Batman, but if there were only that version of Batman, he would get boring very quickly. Kinda like eating pizza every night: it's a nice thought, but not a nice reality.

By the way, I liked #423's cover, but a grey background would have been more dramatic than red. Leave the primary colors to Superman.

Sincerely,
Richard E. Hopkins Jr.
4011 Westover Rd. SE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

*****

Dear Denny and Company,

Outstanding! "You Shoulda Seen Him..." in BATMAN #423 reminds me of another story in Batman about 15 years ago. I believe it was called "The Many Faces of Batman." Both stories had multiple points of view, each equally valid in its own way. The earlier story dealt with the impressions Batman leaves with the youth, the current one shows how cops see him.

Truthfully, it's nice to see the Guardian of Night as compared to the infamous Darknight Detective mode of his personality. His nice side has been under wraps too long. In all three of his cases that night his goal was to save someone, not bust crooks. And, as could be seen at the end of the book, it happened to make him feel good. Thanks, Jim, for bringing back a Batman long neglected.

It's too bad S.W.A.T. team leader Greg can't imagine the Batman with a heart and soul. I mean the "one tough ol' mother" image is great in some situations, but if that's all the Batman is, then I think he should be locked up. A vigilante like that would be more dangerous than helpful, especially with no answerable authority above him. (The commissioner is there, but the Batman doesn't have to deal with him.)

In #400 he was depressed because the (super)crooks he sent to jail had a notorious lack of reformability. Who knows? Maybe a Christmas card or two sent to the Batman (c/o Bruce Wayne, of course) from Hank and Jenny might remind him of some of his greater successes. It wouldn't hurt for ol' Bruce and Alfred to get cards, either. That's what his job is really about anyway: saving people who can't solve their problems by themselves.

Keep up the good work. I like this Batman a lot better than the callous individual we've seen since THE DARK KNIGHT. Thanks.

Respectfully,
M.A. McConnell
(No address given)

*****

Dear Denny and Dan,

BATMAN #424 was important. I don't think Felipe slipped. I don't think anyone does. Yes, he probably deserved to die, but that really doesn't matter, does it?

Jason has some thinking to do. If he lives, that is. If it turns out that you decide to kill him, get a new Robin. I know a lot of people want Batman solo, but if he stays a brooding avenger forever, he'll crack. He needs Robin. I'm not sure if that Robin is Jason, but Batman needs someone.

Sincerely,
Russ Bedell
8 McCullough Drive
Glen Rock, PA 17327

*****

Dear Bat-Brains,

I've just finished reading BATMAN #421 and I've got to say that's one of the most interesting and in-depth stories I've read in a long time. Don't get me wrong, I love what you guys are doing with the Batman bit here and in TEC (though I HATE seeing him out in costume during daylight), but now we're starting to get to the nitty gritty of the characters. We saw this about Commissioner Gordon in BATMAN: YEAR ONE some time ago, the Batman in SON OF THE DEMON, and even with the Joker in THE KILLING JOKE. Now it's Robin's turn. To most of us he's just a little nerd who makes bad puns and constantly gets into trouble, but "The Diplomat's Son" showed there's more to him than meets the mask. He's not just some kid out to get his kicks beating up men twice his size, but is someone concerned about the social problems of this world, particularly how they affect the innocent. Having been orphaned while young and out on the streets, he knows what it's like to be alone, unwanted and scared. Surely he must empathize with the victims of crime, even to the point, as we saw, of becoming obsessed with it. But how far will you guys take this? Are we seeing the beginnings of a miniature Batman here? We see the Batman letting him vent his frustrations, but how far will the Batman let it go, especially in the light of the last few panels? From the expression of the Batman's face in the last panel, we can see that he's thinking serious thoughts about the Boy Wonder, if not plain doubts about letting him continue as his sidekick. These developments would be interesting to see in the coming months, and might give meat to possible subplots (which have been sorely lacking), which would make the magazine more than just a "villain of the month" title.

So keep up the good work, guys. I've been a BATMAN fan since I was a wee boy and am waiting with bated breath for the Batman movie.

Joel Cruz
2841 N. Rockwell
Chicago, IL 60618

*****

Dear Mr. Starlin,

Thanks for BATMAN #424. It's a story that makes me like the new Robin, something I haven't done since Dick Grayson. The first incarnation of Jason Todd was a "goody two-shoes" little brat. I like the current version much better. He's now a vindictive, vengeful little brat. I've always preferred stories of Batman alone, but if there has to be a Robin, I'm glad it's one with a personality, good or bad. Now I'm

waiting for him to toss the Joker off a roof—more power to him!

Sincerely,
Jerry Smith
(No address given)

*****

Dear Bat-Signals,

BATMAN #424 was a real emotional issue. My blood boiled for the death of that pond-scum, Felipe, and bled for the poor woman, Gloria. I felt the fear in her when she realized the man who assaulted her was released. I felt anger along with frustration, as Jason did, and was saddened by the suicide of Gloria. My emotions flared at this and when Robin "scared" the dirtbag off his perch, I cheered. Not bad for a comic book.

Joseph Olszewski, Jr.
2802 Shelly Road
Philadelphia, PA 19152

P.S. I think Robin lied to the Batman. I think he really did push Felipe off.

*****

Dear Editor,

Don't make a big fuss about Robin getting killed. Waste him, bury him, and get on to important things. Bruce and Dick Grayson should have been a team the whole time. Robin was a wimp. Don't expect us to get all worked up. After you butchered Supergirl, we don't care if there is a holocaust of all the DC heroes.

Life is cheap!

Daniel Snyder
Wimber, PA

*****

Dear Dan,

"Consequences" was very well done. Consequences are what Jason didn't think about when he pushed Felipe off the building. I agree with what Jason did, but Batman cannot keep him as his partner. Jason was responsible for Felipe's death whether he pushed him or "spooked him." Gordon almost paid the price for Jason's actions, as did Batman. I loved this story and it has made me think a lot about Jason and the outcome of "A Death in the Family." BATMAN #424 and #425 have decided Jason's fate.

Thank you.
George Gustines
100 W. 105 St. Apt. #C2
New York, NY 10025

*****

Dear Dan and Dennis,

I'm glad to see the Garzonas Case continued; Felipe's plummeting end seemed pretty final in issue #424. I was hoping to see more reaction from Bruce and Jason although I believed Jason when he said, "I spooked him. He slipped." The question is, did Bruce believe him? If the answer is "no" then the partnership is seriously damaged. If Batman can't trust Robin, who can he trust?

Interesting to see the bat-a-rang and drug-tipped dart being used. The utility belt arsenal seems to have been largely ignored recently.

I can see reasons for and against the demise of Robin. It seems most writers, in the wake of the DARK KNIGHT and YEAR ONE books, like to do gritty solo Batman stories. Jim Starlin has just begun to show Jason's real ability to enhance the Batman mythos. I might have to vote both ways.

And Dennis, call yourself what you like. Some people have wild success with their identity crises; look at Bruce Wayne and Clark Kent.

Charlie Harris
2657 N. Mountain Ave.
Tucson, AZ 85719-3140

*****

Dear Dan,

I did not expect to be writing so soon, but then I did not expect #425 to be a continuation of #424, either. That is one of the things I like about Jim Starlin's Batman: actions do have consequences. There is a gritty realism to his stories that I love. "Realism" is a term that is overused and, in a way, totally inappropriate to the Batman. But things don't just happen and are then forgotten in his world. The last two issues build on the "dumpster killer" stories, and I am already confident that "A Death in the Family" will build on them. The Batman makes mistakes, as well as clever moves. He is shown to be a complex personality, and his reactions vary as a real person's do, but there is a basic consistency to him that is as unchanging as granite.

The fight scene (and the issue was just one long fight scene) was well done. Mark "Doc" Bright and Steve Mitchell did an excellent job on it. Fight scenes can be hard to portray in an intelligible fashion, but Mark and Steve conveyed what was happening beautifully. While the first few pages were overly stark and lacking in detail, I particularly enjoyed the way Batman's failure to connect solidly at the bottom of page 16 snowballs until it is almost fatal. It shows how slender is the edge that allows him to fight so many baddies simultaneously. It is a narrow line between success and death in his profession.

Although this was a "fight issue," which I normally dislike, Jim drove in his moral, and more. We see the bind Bruce has been placed in, and the difficulty of the situation for all concerned. There is no simple solution to this problem, except to kill off Jason in the next issue. I hope you don't.

Sincerely,
Rick Peterson
12290 Corte Sabio #3208
San Diego, CA 92128

*****

Dear Denny,

I heard some of what you are planning for "A Death in the Family" story line, including the phone-in number wrinkle and I didn't want to take any chances whatsoever.

Kill him.

Your pal,
Rich Kreiner

From the Den

Pat Bastienne stopped me in the hall and said, "We're about to renew Jim Aparo's contract. Do you have any objections?"

Objections? Well, no, you could say I don't have any objections to having Jim continue working with me. The only objection I have is that we can't pay him a million dollars a year.

He's very quiet. Very modest. And very good. He has never had the name or fame or, to be honest, the fan following of some of his colleagues, but professionals invariably speak of him with respect and admiration—particularly professional writers. He never complains that a script is too difficult, too tricky, too demanding. He simply figures out a way to do what he is asked and then does it, always well and sometimes brilliantly.

He is the kind of artist who makes an editor want to come to work in the morning—dedicated, extremely accomplished *and* reliable *and* pleasant *and* completely devoid of temperament.

I'm lucky. I've worked with Jim as *both* writer and editor off and on for almost 20 years. He's never failed to exceed my expectations and I count the projects I've shared with him among the most satisfying I've been involved in.

Jim might not be happy when he reads this. He's not much of a self-promoter, which may be why he hasn't always gotten the recognition he deserves, and he's generally stayed far away from spotlights, so I assume he doesn't like to be praised. I hope he forgives me. People like Jim Aparo are rare, indeed, and if we can't pay them a million a year, at least we can occasionally acknowledge who and what they are, and what they mean to us.

DENNY

Well, folks, there it is. I'm sure some of you will never forgive us. Jason Todd is dead. Many of you are in mourning, upset that your fellow comics fans felt Jason would better serve the needs of our story in death than in life. Many more of you feel that Batman works best alone, and are looking forward to the further adventures of a driven Dark Knight. I'd like to think that you're all somewhat saddened, and not jumping up and down singing "we offed the twerp, we offed the twerp." I hope so, anyway. I myself voted to keep him alive.

Good night, Gotham.
Rest in peace, Jason.

—Dan Raspler
Assistant Editor